DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 120 EC 161 890

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TITLE Needed Competencies for Teaching Gifted and Talented Students.
INSTITUTION Mississippi State Univ., Mississippi State.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 27p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Competence; *Curriculum Development; *Evaluation Methods; *Gifted; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Surveys on competencies for teaching gifted and talented students were completed by 96 elementary and secondary teachers of the gifted. Ss were asked to rate actual and desirable competencies and to report on a number of personal and demographic variables. Findings revealed 12 areas demonstrating the most significant discrepancy between actual and desired competence including familiarity with screening and assessment instruments and methods, curriculum development to foster affective and cognitive processes, development of interpersonal skills to strengthen self concept, and communication of program goals and objectives to regular classroom teachers and the public. Teachers with more teaching experience and education expressed a more positive view of their actual competencies. Implications for teacher education were noted. Questionnaires are attached. (CL)

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NEEDED COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

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Research in teacher training has indicated the need to develop effective measures that determine the competency levels of our classroom teachers. This need has extended itself to encompass all teachers, including those in specialized areas such as teachers of gifted and talented students. This research has involved the use of a specific instrument designed by the Missouri State Department of Education, Office of Gifted and Alternative Programs. This instrument was designed to measure the actual and desirable competencies of teachers of gifted and talented students. The major areas surveyed included: screening, assessment, curriculum, instruction, materials, co rdination and evaluation procedures. The objectives of this research were twofold. First, to assess on a statewide basis, the extent to which certain teaching competencies were rated as desirable by teachers of gifted and talented students. The second objective was to assess the extent to which certified teachers of gifted and talented student felt qualified in each of the competencies listed. Descriptive data collected also indicated specific areas in which further training was desired on the part of the teachers surveyed.

A statewide random sample of certified teachers of the gifted and talented was selected to receive the questionnaire. In addition to the rating of actual and desirable competencies, the teachers were further asked to describe themselves in terms of the following information: a) level of program (elementary, junior high, senior high or cross-level); b) degree earned (Bachelor's in elementary, secondary or special education; Master's in elementary, secondary or special education; and other degrees earned); c) male or female; d) type of program (gifted, talented or combined); e) number of total years in teaching; f) number of years in gifted education and g) whether or not they were currently teaching in a gifted or talented program. Approximately forty percent (n=96) of

the questionnaires were returned. Of those returned the majority were from elementary (45%) gifted (78%) programs functioning in municipal separate school districts (59%). The majority of teachers had less than five years teaching experience (87%) in gifted/talented programs and all respondents were currently teaching. Three items: sex, degree earned and overall teaching experience were found to be significant in the description of the subpopulations. These are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Description of Subpopulations

	Actual Competency	Desirable Competency
Degree Earned	.225*	.290**
Sex	.457**	.737**
Overall Teaching Experience	.254*	.271**
District	.181	.150
Level Taught	.099	.151
Type of Program	-.093	.160
Years Teaching Gifted/Talented	.162	.314

*p < .05 **p < .01

The internal reliability of the actual scale and the desirable scale was established at the .05 level through computing an Alpha Coefficient. The data collected indicated significant differences in all actual and desirable teaching competencies at the .001 level of confidence. These are found in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation of Actual and Desirable Competencies

COMPETENCY	Actual		Desirable		
	X	SD	X	SD	t
Screening					
1. Familiar with instruments and methods	3.22	.95	4.41	.70	10.54*
2. Recognize behavioral signs	3.72	.76	4.66	.50	11.15*
3. Aware of effect of environmental variables	3.42	1.02	4.22	.85	7.56*
4. Able to plan and supervise screening program	3.06	1.21	1.07	.12	6.55*
Assessment					
5. Familiar with variety of instruments and procedures	3.10	.96	4.27	.65	10.61*
6. Familiar with alternative methods to assess culturally divergent and economically disadvantaged	2.66	1.05	4.03	.86	9.87*
7. Able to plan and supervise assessment program	2.92	.99	3.80	1.07	6.86*
Curriculum					
8. Able to plan cognitive curriculum	3.76	.81	4.82	.54	12.36*
9. Able to plan affective curriculum	3.66	.92	4.77	.61	11.23*
10. Considers interests and preferences of students	3.98	.93	4.68	.64	7.52*
11. Understands career planning for gifted	3.40	1.10	4.28	.91	6,92*

Table 2 continued.

COMPETENCY	Actual $\bar{X}$	Actual SD	Desirable $\bar{X}$	Desirable SD	t
Instruction					
12. Uses a variety of instructional styles	3.68	.93	4.68	.66	9.94*
13. Plans instructional activities using all content domains	3.51	.98	4.62	.70	9.43*
14. Plans instructional activities to develop creativity	3.81	.95	4.65	.63	8.02*
15. Fosters the development of self-concept	3.82	.83	4.72	.63	10.00*
16. Fosters the development of leadership	3.43	1.06	4.46	.71	8.59*
17. Plans for the development and expression of artistic talent	3.46	.92	4.10	.92	7.13*
18. Familiar with research methods and encourages independent study	3.78	.97	4.70	.51	8.65*
19. Can organize activities and manage all students	3.81	1.04	4.67	.47	7.89*
Materials					
20. Can use, select and adapt materials to strengthen cognitive abilities	3.75	.84	4.65	.63	11.15*
21. Can use, select and adapt materials to strengthen academic abilities	3.67	1.01	4.57	.61	7.58*
22. Can use, select and adapt materials to develop creativity	3.67	.96	4.55	.63	8.16*

Table 2 continued.

COMPETENCY	Actual $\bar{X}$	Actual SD	Desirable $\bar{X}$	Desirable SD	t
23. Can use, adapt and select materials to develop self-concept	3.37	1.20	4.43	.88	8.18*
24. Can use, adapt and select materials to strengthen leadership	3.18	1.14	4.35	.74	9.02*
25. Can use, adapt and select materials to develop artistic talent	3.31	1.08	4.27	.79	8.12*
Coordination					
26. Capable of locating and obtaining support	3.82	1.15	4.63	.62	6.27*
27. Capable of organizing and coordinating delivery services	3.82	1.15	4.63	.62	7.33*
28. Able to integrate gifted and regular classroom goals and objectives	3.23	.98	4.23	.81	8.67*
29. Effectively communicate program goals with others	3.42	.99	4.68	.51	10.98*
30. Can assist regular classroom teacher	3.16	1.06	4.28	.86	9.29*
Evaluation					
31. Can use a variety of instruments	3.07	1.07	4.38	.66	10.24*
32. Can measure development	2.95	1.03	4.27	.74	11.66*

Table 2 continued.

COMPETENCY	Actual $\bar{X}$	Actual SD	Desirable $\bar{X}$	Desirable SD	t
33. Able to involve persons in impact evaluation	3.01	1.00	4.26	.77	10.42*
34. Able to communicate evaluation results	3.07	1.06	4.26	.83	10.17*
35. Able to interpret and revise program	3.31	1.21	4.56	.72	9.35*

*p< .001

The twelve areas demonstrating the most significant discrepancy between actual and desirable competency were: familarity with instruments and methods of screening and assessment; recognition of behavioral characteristics of superior students; planning and development of curriculum to strengthen cognitive processes; planning and development of curriculum to strengthen affective processes; development of interpersonal skills to strengthen self-concept; selection and development of specific materials designed to strengthen evaluation skills, inductive and deductive reasoning skills and leadership skills; the communication of program goals and objectives to regular classroom teachers and the public; and all components of the evaluation process.

There are several implications that can be drawn from this study. The teachers surveyed demonstrated a wide discrepency between those areas designated

as desirable competencies and those designated as actual competencies. Teachers with more teaching experience and education demonstrated a more positive view of their actual competencies. This indicates a positive relationship between degree earned, years of teaching experience and achievement of perceived competence in teaching gifted and talented students (See Table 1.)

Two major areas were responsible for the overall discrepancy found between actual and desirable competency. These were: a) screening and assessment for placement procedures and, b) evaluation processes including: evaluation of learning outcomes; measuring development; involvement of others in the evaluation process; communication of results; and interpretation and resultant modification of instructional procedures based on evaluation data. In addition to the major areas, the teachers showed discrepencies between actual and desirable teaching competencies in the areas of curriculum, instruction, materials and in the coordination of the gifted program with the regular classroom teacher.

It is imperative that teachers of the gifted and talented acquire the competencies necessary to appropriately teach their students. The acquisition of certification in gifted education does not insure competency in assessment, program development, evaluation or practice. Certification standards and graduate level coursework should be given close scrutiny to insure that the acquisition of minimum competency skills accompanies certification or degree programs. The review of these programs and standards should provide further

education and training in screening and assessment skills. Although not directly responsible for screening and placement, teachers of the gifted are often called upon to explain and justify placement of students or to suggest appropriate measures for screening use. The areas of curriculum planning, instruction and material development need to be reviewed paying particular attention to the development of these areas in reference to leadership abilities and self-concept. In addition, the communication skills necessary to adequately explain the goals and objectives of the gifted program to students, other teachers, administrators, parents and the community are imperative to the continued acceptance, growth and development of the program. Lack of adequate communication can lead to gross misunderstanding of the program on the part of non-participants. The teachers of the gifted/talented should also be able to contribute to the regular classroom program in an appropriate manner. In order to provide a complete educational plan for the gifted student, interaction between the gifted program and the regular classroom should occur at regular intervals. Finally, the most critical of discrepency between actual and desirable competency was found in the evaluation procedures. Lack of competence in the use and interpretation of evaluation methods leaves the educational programs for gifted at a haphazard level, subject to the fluctuation of school budgets, change of staff or whims of administrators. In order to become a fully functioning integral part of the school system, teachers of the gifted and talented must be able to provide the accountability necessary to establish the positive impact of the program. Teachers of the gifted and talented must become competent in the use of evaluation procedures to monitor student development, evaluate the effectiveness

of the instructional program, make appropriate changes based on evaluation data and interpret the results to the appropriate persons involved. Without adequate teacher competency in all phases of gifted education programs these programs will remain educational frills instead of the educational imperatives they should be.

Selected Competencies for Teachers of the Gifted Questionnaire

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Listed on the following pages are 35 competencies which research has shown to be important in designing and operating programs for gifted students. For each competency, circle the number on the scale which indicates the importance for teachers of the gifted. The following definitions apply to the two scales in this instrument:

DESIRABLE COMPETENCIES: The extent to which the competency should be practiced in the classrooms

ACTUAL COMPETENCIES: The extent to which the competency is practiced in the classrooms

Each behavior item is to be rated on both scales, the Desirable Competencies scale and the Actual Competencies scale. Please draw a circle around the number which best describes your perception of the proper rating of the item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing the lowest rating and 5 the highest rating.

When rating on the Desirable Competencies scale, a rating of 1 indicates that you perceive the particular behavior as unimportant as a teacher competence; a rating of 5 indicates that you perceive the particular behavior as highly important as a teacher competence; and a rating of 2, 3, or 4 indicates your perception of the importance of the competency as falling somewhere between the two extreme ratings.

When rating on the Actual Competencies scale, a rating of 1 indicates that you perceive the particular behavior as occurring in classrooms very rarely; a rating of 5 indicates that you perceive the particular behavior as occurring frequently or extensively in classrooms; and a rating of 2, 3, or 4 indicates your perception of the frequency of occurrence of the behavior as falling somewhere between the two extreme ratings.

In addition if you would desire further training on any of the competencies listed please place a check mark in the column next to the desired competency.

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONNAIRE

Selected Competencies for Teachers of the Gifted:
Importance of and Need for Further Training

NAME:_____ CURRENT ADDRESS:_____ SCHOOL:_____

CHECK ONE: 1. ____ Elementary 2. _____ Junior High 3. ____ Senior High

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CHECK ONE: 1. ____ Bachelor's/ Elem. Educ. 2. ____ Bachelor's/ Secondary Educ. 3. ____ Bachelor's/ Special Education

4. ____ Master's/ Elem. Educ. 5. ____ Master's/ Secondary Educ. 6. ____ Master's/ Special Educ. 7. ____ Other Degree

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PLEASE ANSWER: 1. Male Female 2. Currently teaching in gifted program: YES NO

3. Program Type: GIFTED TALENTED 4. Number of Years Total Teaching:_____

5. Number of Years in Gifted Education:_____

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROGRAM:

COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHERS OF THE GIFTED QUESTIONNAIRE

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
SCREENING											
1. The teacher of the gifted is familiar with instruments and methods of screening for superior cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and for artistic talents.	1	2	3		5	1	2	3	4	5	____
2. The teacher of the gifted can recognize behavioral signs of superior cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
3. The teacher of the gifted is aware of environmental variables which affect the degree to which cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents can be measured or observed.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
4. The teacher of the gifted is able to plan and supervise a screening program designed to identify students with superior cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
ASSESSMENT											
5. The teacher of the gifted is familiar with a variety of instruments and procedures for assessing outstanding cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
6. The teacher of the gifted is familiar with alternate methods of assessing the cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents of culturally divergent and economically disadvantaged students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
7. The teacher of the gifted is able to plan and supervise an assessment program, resulting in the identification of students with outstanding cognitive, academic, creative, and leadership abilities and artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
CURRICULUM											
8. The teacher of the gifted is able to plan and develop a curriculum which will strengthen higher level cognitive processes, develop creativity and leadership, and offer opportunities for the expression of artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
9. The teacher of the gifted is able to plan and develop a curriculum which will strengthen higher level affective processes, develop interpersonal skills, and strengthen the self-concepts of students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
10. The teacher of the gifted considers the interests and preferences of students when planning the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
11. The teacher of the gifted understands the problems faced by students in career planning and adapts career education concepts to meet the special needs of his/her students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
INSTRUCTION											
12. The teacher of the gifted uses a variety of instructional strategies in response to the individual learning styles and abilities of gifted students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
13. The teacher of the gifted plans instructional activities which strengthen higher level cognitive and affective processes, using content drawn from all academic areas.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
14. The teacher of the gifted plans instructional activities which develop creativity and offer opportunity for creative production.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
15. The teacher of the gifted uses instructional strategies and possesses interpersonal skills which foster the development of positive self-concepts.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
16. The teacher of the gifted plans instructional activities which foster the development of leadership ability.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
17. The teacher of the gifted plans instructional activities which offer the opportunity for the development and expression of artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
18. The teacher of the gifted is familiar with research methodology and is capable of supervising students engaged in independent and group research projects.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
19. The teacher of the gifted can organize activities and manage for all students assigned to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
MATERIALS											
20. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to strengthen such cognitive abilities as evaluation, inductive and deductive reasoning, forecasting, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
21. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to strengthen academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
22. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to develop creativity and increase creative production.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
23. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to develop self-concept, interpersonal skills, and higher level affective skills.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
24. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to develop and strengthen leadership ability.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
25. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use materials designed to encourage the development and expression of artistic talents.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
COORDINATION											
26. The teacher of the gifted is capable of locating and obtaining home, school, and community resources which will strengthen the program for gifted students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
27. The teacher of the gifted is capable of organizing and coordinating the delivery of services and resources on behalf of gifted students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____

	Desirable Competencies					Actual Competencies					
	Unimportant	Seldom Important	Occasionally Important	Important	Extremely Important	Unsatisfactory	Adequate Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Highly Competent	Would desire further training
28. The teacher of the gifted is able to integrate the goals and objectives of the gifted program with those of the regular instructional program where appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
29. The teacher of the gifted can effectively communicate the goals and objectives of the gifted program to students, other teachers, administrators, parents, and the community.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
30. The teacher of the gifted is able to assist regular classroom teachers in meeting the needs of their gifted students.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
EVALUATION											
31. The teacher of the gifted can select, adapt, create, and use a variety of instruments and methods for evaluating learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
32. The teacher of the gifted can measure the development of cognitive, affective, and academic skills and creative, leadership, and artistic ability.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____
33. The teacher of the gifted is able to involve students, faculty, and parents in the evaluation of the total impact of special services for the gifted.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	____